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THE BAPTIST

Record

JOURNAL OF THE MISSISSIPPI BAPTIST CONVENTION

Missionary family adjusting to new life

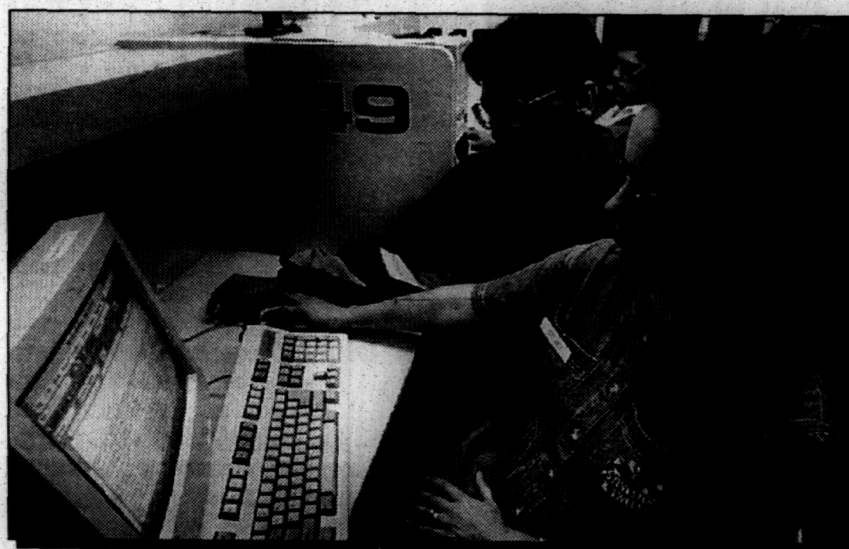
EDITOR'S NOTE: When Jeno Smith was a teenage boy, he heard a missionary speak at a camp in South Carolina. God touched Smith's heart then and the young man knew he would find himself on the mission field someday. He's in Brazil today after a seminary degree, a stint as a youth minister, and time put in as a missions education publication editor for the Southern Baptist Brotherhood Commission. He has a wife, Sherri, (an MK who grew up in Brazil) and two children, Andrea and Austin. What follows are Smith's reflections on his first two months in Brazil.

We arrived! Customs was so much easier than we expected. They didn't even check our bags. We could have brought an elephant through. And man is it cold. It's so windy. But it seems so right for us to be here. Someone broke into our

house a few days before we arrived and took some appliances and furniture. At least it happened before we got here. Andrea got the room she wanted and Austin has a backyard, complete with grass and a boxer named Max. Sherri is feeling at home faster than we are, but this is her home in a way.

The Brazilian people are so friendly and helpful. They are hard-working. The Christians shine out above all else, no wonder. I'm so excited to be here! Today we begin officially "barefooting" with the language. I want so much to communicate more verbally. I'm learning, slowly. I give and receive lots of smiles. For the next few months, really for a lifetime, my attitude will tell it all.

The other missionaries here are lifesavers as we learn our way around Campinas. We are



PREPARING TO GO — Jeno and Sherri Smith share a computer terminal at the FMB Missionary Learning Center in Rockville, Va. They are now on the mission field in Campinas, Brazil. The call marks a return for Sherri, an MK who grew up in Brazil, and the culmination of a life-long vision for Jeno. (Photo by Warren Johnson)

loving it and adjusting to it. We live on the other side of the city from most of them, but they have been a huge help to us.

We went out for dinner the other night and the waiter thought we said full orders when we tried to ask for half. He brought a mountain of food and it cost \$60. We asked for something to take the food home in, and they charged us for the containers too! But what should we expect? It cost \$46 to gas up our tiny car!

I am beginning to be able to talk to people. Yesterday I went to the bank and got money myself without any help. Then I went to a mechanic and got the oil changed in the car, again, no help. That was a great day. Driving has been a hoot. Lines and arrows mean nothing. The nose goes. That's the saying. You just stick your nose out there and go.

Andrea and Austin go to a Brazilian school. It was tough at first, especially for Andrea. The kids picked on her because she has light hair. Things are better now.

After language class I spend a lot of time in the park and with the merchants around the park. They sell sliced coconuts. I try to share with them. Much of it is acted out to try and show them what I mean. I am trying to build relationships.

Austin and I are gonna go fly kites tomorrow. We made our first homemade kite. We can't wait to fly it.

This has all been better than I expected. But I really didn't know what to expect. The people, the neighborhood, we are feeling a part of things now. I'm so grateful to Southern Baptists for the opportunity to be here. What an opportunity. It's one of a lifetime for me.

What your Lottie Moon gifts can do!

A Lottie Moon gift of \$1 can

- ◆ pay for 10 evangelistic tracts in Guatemala.
- ◆ provide three loaves of bread to feed a hungry family in Chechnya.

A Lottie Moon gift of \$10 can

- ◆ buy a year's worth of literature for a Sunday School class in Guatemala.
- ◆ pay for 75 AIDS tracts to be printed for Angola or Mozambique.

A Lottie Moon gift of \$100 can

- ◆ pay for five New Testaments in Japan.
- ◆ purchase material to seal the roof of a missionary residence in Mexico.

A Lottie Moon gift of \$1,000 can

- ◆ purchase a portable sound system for street preaching in the Azores of Portugal.
- ◆ buy discipleship material for 100 new Christians in Swaziland.

A Lottie Moon gift of \$10,000 can

- ◆ purchase a strategic church plot in a city in Zimbabwe.
- ◆ provide one year of language study for a new missionary in Japan or Taiwan.

A Lottie Moon gift of \$100,000 can

- ◆ fund the entire operating budget for the present Southern Baptist work in Angola.
- ◆ purchase a small, two-bedroom house in the south of France.



MISSIONARIES
From Churches with Love

WHAT'S IN THE RECORD

MBCB to expand

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Missionaries appointed

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Carey receives largest gift

1

90-year old still teaching

1

Looking back

10 years ago

The SBC Peace Committee adopts two statements — on theology and denominational politics — during an intense 10th meeting. Chairman Charles Fuller says the two statements "form the basis for reconciliation" after more than seven years of controversy.

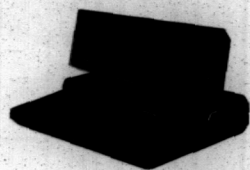
20 years ago

Julia Otis of Tupelo is elected the first female secretary of the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board (MBCB) executive committee at the first meeting of the new board immediately after the adjournment of the Mississippi Baptist Convention.

50 years ago

The Mississippi Baptist Convention Board approves creation of an advisory committee for "The Baptist Record." Named to the committee are: Norman W. Cox, J. D. Franks, Webb Brame, W. L. Day, Joe T. Odle, C. B. Hamlett III, and E. D. Hurst.

EDITOR'S NOTEBOOK



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Perkins Jr.**
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God was there

In our loud, crowded, hurry-up, spiritually-empty culture, there is a place where Christians can still sense the unmistakable presence and power of Almighty God.

It's called a missionary appointment service.

God is there because he has called these men and women into the most important work of all — giving everyone on earth the opportunity to come into a right relationship with the Father through his Son, Jesus Christ (John 3:16).

God is there because he wants his missionaries to know that in times of criticism, crisis, discouragement, and danger, he will never desert them (Matt. 28:18-20).

God is there because he wants the people who call after his Son's name to support and encourage his missionaries through constant prayer and sacrificial giving (1 Cor. 4:2).

God was there on Dec. 8, when thousands of Christians witnessed the appointment of 51 new Southern Baptist foreign missionaries at First Church, Jackson (see pages three and four of this issue).

If you are a Mississippi

Baptist, you should have been there, too.

The Foreign Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention chose Mississippi for the final missionary appointment service of 1996 to highlight the faithfulness of this state's 2,000 Southern Baptist churches, which support missions out of proportion to the rest of the Southern Baptist Convention.

First Church, Brookhaven, and First Church, Jackson, give more to the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering each year than any other church in the Southern Baptist Convention.

In 1995, Mississippi led the Southern Baptist Convention in per-member giving to Lottie Moon, with Kewanee Church, Toomsbua, and Pace Church, Pace, at the top of the list in the top state in the Southern Baptist Convention.

There are much larger churches in the denomination, but none more faithful in their financial support of foreign missions than the churches of Mississippi.

When the Southern Baptist Brotherhood Commission asked Mississippi churches earlier this year for 200 boxes of food for starving North Koreans, the churches sent over 1,300 boxes along with more



than enough money to pay for shipping the 52 tons of food to the other side of the world.

That's the Mississippi Baptist way.

As the month of December winds down, churches across the state will be stretching to meet their ambitious Lottie Moon Offering goals. Be sure to make your gift

before the end of the year.

When it comes to winning the world to Christ, Mississippi Baptists are the shining light on the highest hill.

To God be the glory!

Lottie Moon Christmas Offering
National Goal
\$100,000,000

MISSIONARIES
From Churches with Love

GUEST OPINION:

'Messiah' has its rewards

By Buddy McElroy, Minister of Music,
Liberty Church, Liberty

Fashions change and generations come and go, but Handel's "Messiah" continues to be the most-performed and well-attended musical composition in America and England.

There are two reasons why this musical score has lasted so long:

— The words are entirely Scriptural, and

— musicologists like Donald Neven of the Eastman School of Music agree that "Messiah" was written with the help of a source higher than mere humanity.

"Messiah" (no "The" in the title) is unlike any other composition of George Frideric Handel, a Christian man who experienced many hardships and was rejected for his musical style.

In 1741, Handel was miserably discouraged, swimming in debt, and driving himself relentlessly to recover from one failure after another.

Then two unforeseen events occurred. A friend named Charles Jennings gave Handel the libretto (text) for "Messiah" at almost the same time Handel received a commission to produce a musical composition for a charity benefit.

Handel became so absorbed in setting the libretto to music that he did not leave his room for three weeks, rarely stopping to eat or sleep.

In six days he completed part one, known as the Christmas portion because it deals with the prophecy of God's plan to redeem humanity through the Messiah.

He completed part two in nine days. Part two deals with the Messiah's sacrifice and man's rejection of that offer of redemption.

Only six additional days were needed to complete part three, a hymn of Thanksgiving for the Messiah's overthrow of death.

"Messiah" premiered on April 13, 1742, raising 400 pounds for charity and freeing 142 men from debtor's prison.

When Handel later conducted "Messiah" for King George II of England, the monarch was so moved by the triumphant "Hallelujah Chorus" that he rose to his feet and was quickly

followed by the rest of the audience.

Thus was born a tradition that has lasted for more than 250 years.

Handel personally conducted more than 30 performances of "Messiah," raising thousands of pounds for charity.

A Handel biographer wrote, "'Messiah' had fed the hungry, clothed the naked, fostered the orphans — more than any other single musical production in this or any country."

Another biographer wrote, "Perhaps 'Messiah' has done more to teach people around the world the story of Jesus Christ than any theological book ever written by a human."

The difficulty of the music in "Messiah" places it out of reach for the average choir, unless the choir's members are willing to spend the time and make the effort required by the music.

The rewards of doing so are much greater than the cost.

Cooperative Program gifts show more increases

Mississippi Baptists have averaged just over \$2 million per month in Cooperative Program gifts for the first 11 months of 1996, according to Bill Causey, executive director-treasurer of the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board (MBCB) which disburses the funds. Total giving for January through November is \$22,448,082, which is \$927,227, or 4.31 percent more than that given in the same period of 1995.

The range of giving this year has been from January's \$2,586,166 to June's \$1,584,029. November giving was \$1,831,672, which is \$136,091 more than that given in November of 1995.

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)—Southern Baptist Convention Cooperative Program gifts for the month of November totaled \$3.2 million more than the same month in 1995, according to Morris H. Chapman, president and chief executive of the SBC Executive Committee.

Gifts for November 1996 reached \$13,934,056 compared to November 1995 of \$10,743,955, an increase of \$3,190,100 or 29.69%.

For the first two months of the SBC's 1996-97 fiscal year, CP gifts have totaled \$26,249,173 compared to the same period in the last fiscal year of \$21,681,338, an increase of \$4,567,834 or 21.07%.

Executive committee adds MBCB positions

By Tim Nicholas
MBCB Communications Director

In response to the news that the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board (MBCB) has accumulated a 90-day operating reserve, the MBCB Executive Committee agreed on a plan to utilize the interest on the reserve to fund MBCB staff positions and the Partnership Missions office.

MBCB executive director-treasurer Bill Causey told the committee, meeting at the Baptist Building in Jackson on Dec. 3, that the reserve has been achieved more than six months earlier than expected "based on a conservative business policy," and is currently providing approximately \$300,000 per year in interest.

The committee approved Causey's request to add three staff members and to fund the Partnership Missions office.

Previously, partnership work had been funded through the challenge portion of the Cooperative Program (CP) budget, which is available only if the budget has a surplus.

The proposals approved by the Executive Committee would cost about \$250,000 of the interest generated by the operating reserve.

Two of the new staff positions will be in the Evangelism Department, where S. A. "Sonny" Adkins is director.

— A full-time general consultant, replacing the half-time position vacated by James Fancher, who retired.

— A youth evangelism consultant, allowing consolidation of several of the youth-oriented ministries of MBCB.

The third position is in the executive director-treasurer's office, developing lay ministries and providing liaison for areas

of possible joint strategy among other denominations and non-denominational groups.

Causey said that in recent years public pressure has "been systematically taking away the Christian witness of our schools."

Causey said the new staffer, likely a layman, for example could organize Christian coaches to hold summer basketball clinics away from schools "and deliberately use their witness."

Other areas of possible work would be in developing Christian fellowships of such groups as school administrators or attorneys, and in providing follow-up to Baptist participation in the Fellowship of Christian Athletes or Promise Keepers.

Causey noted that the new work "in no way touches or impinges on the Brotherhood Department," which organizes Mississippi men and boys for

missions and mission education.

The Executive Committee also approved a proposal to spend up to \$60,000 in 1997 for production and purchase of MBCB religious advertising on television and radio.

Funding would come from the challenge portion of the state CP budget.

Also, the group approved a new ice maker for Gulfshore Baptist Assembly at \$5,950, and elected Wilton Bennett of Richton to fill the unexpired term of the board member from Greene Association, Jay Turner, who died.

THE
SECOND
FRONT PAGE

THE BAPTIST
Record

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Missionaries appointed in Jackson

By William H. Perkins Jr.
Editor

The Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board (FMB) appointed 51 missionaries Dec. 8 at First Church, Jackson, in a emotional commissioning service that concluded a year in which FMB sent 587 new missionaries around the world to spread the gospel of Jesus Christ.

After a processional of international flags opened the service, First Church Pastor Frank Pollard offered a prayer and a welcome to the 3,500 people assembled in the sanctuary of the church.

A number of Mississippi churches cancelled Sunday night services so their members could attend the missionary appointment service.

Avery Willis, FMB senior vice-president for overseas operations, reported on the state of Southern Baptist foreign missions, and on his recent trip to Eastern Europe and areas of the former Soviet Union.

Bill Blanchard, pastor of First Church, Soddy-Daisy, Tenn., and chairman of the FMB board of trustees, made the formal recommendations for the missionaries' appointments.

The appointments were unanimously approved by the FMB trustees in attendance.

Each of the missionaries then gave a brief testimony regarding their call to foreign missions.

Among the Mississippi missionaries appointed were:

— Celeste R. Corey, a member of Friendship Church, Grenada, who will serve as an education coordinator for missionary children in southern Asia and the Pacific areas; and
— Gulfport native Brad Roderick and his wife Gretchen. They will serve in southern Asia as church planters.

Frank Gunn, pastor of First Church, Biloxi, and a FMB trustee, offered a prayer of dedication for the work of the new missionaries.

In the most emotional moment of the service, many of the people in attendance surrounded the new missionaries and placed their hands on them during Gunn's prayer.

FMB President Jerry Rankin, a Mississippi native and graduate of Mississippi College in Clinton, told the near-capacity crowd in his charge to the missionaries, "I believe this is the last generation of missionaries."

Rankin read from Jer. 18, where God told the prophet Jeremiah to go to the potter's house and watch as the potter reshaped a flawed pot on his potter's wheel.

He recounted how he felt in 1952, when he attended a Billy Graham Crusade in the stadium behind Bailey Junior High School in Jackson.

As he left the stadium stands and walked across the football field during the time of commitment that night, Rankin said he remembered thinking, "I wish everyone in the world could know Jesus."

"It was at that moment God put me on the potter's wheel," and changed his life forever, he said.

As the congregation sang "Take My Life, Lead Me Lord," during the time of commitment, two young people came forth to commit themselves to missionary service.

Special music for the service was provided by the sanctuary choir and orchestra of First Church, Jackson, with Mississippi composer Lew King directing.

FMB chose First Church, Jackson, for the missionary appointment service in appreci-

ation for the support from Mississippi churches for foreign missions and the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering for Foreign Missions.

First Church, Bookhaven, and First Church, Jackson, have for several years led the entire Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) in gifts to the Lottie Moon Offering.

In addition, Mississippi churches in 1995 led the SBC in per-member giving to the Lottie Moon Offering. Kewanee Church, Toomsaba, and Pace Church, Pace, led Mississippi in

per-member giving.

For more information on foreign missions service, contact FMB at P.O. Box 6767, Richmond, VA 23230-0767. Telephone: (800) 999-3113, ext. 1635.

For more information on the Lottie Moon Offering in Mississippi, contact Mississippi Woman's Missionary Union, P.O. Box 530, Jackson, MS 39205-0530. Telephone: (601) 968-3800 or toll-free outside Jackson (800) 748-1651.

(See page four for expanded photo coverage of the missionary appointment service.)



FULL HOUSE — A near-capacity crowd watches as the Dec. 8 Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board missionary appointment service at First Church, Jackson, begins with a processional of flags from across the world. A total of 51 new missionaries were appointed during the service, bringing to 587 the number of Southern Baptist missionaries appointed during 1996. (Photo by William H. Perkins Jr.)



In left photo, Mississippian Jerry Rankin (standing, second from left), president of the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board (FMB), joins an unidentified FMB trustee (standing, second from right) and others in a prayer of dedication for a missionary family appointed during the Dec. 8 missionary appointment service at First Church, Jackson. In right photo, newly-appointed missionary Celeste R. Corey, a member of Friendship Church, Grenada, gives her testimony during the service. Corey will serve in southern Asia and the Pacific as an education consultant for children of missionaries. (Photos by William H. Perkins Jr.)



FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH, JACKSON

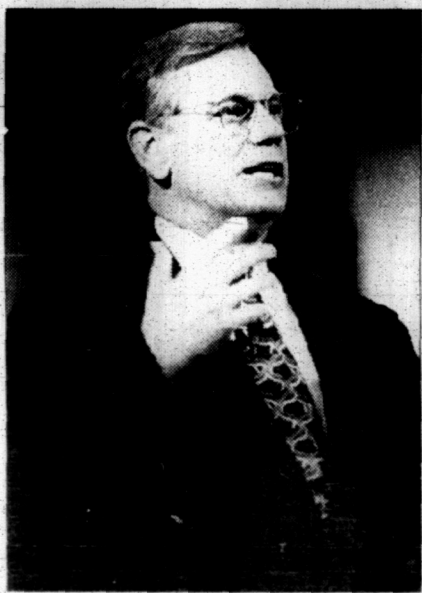
MISSIONARY APPOINTMENT SERVICE

DECEMBER 8, 1996

NATIONAL
LOTTIE
MOON GOAL:
\$100,000,000

YOUR CHURCH'S
GOAL:

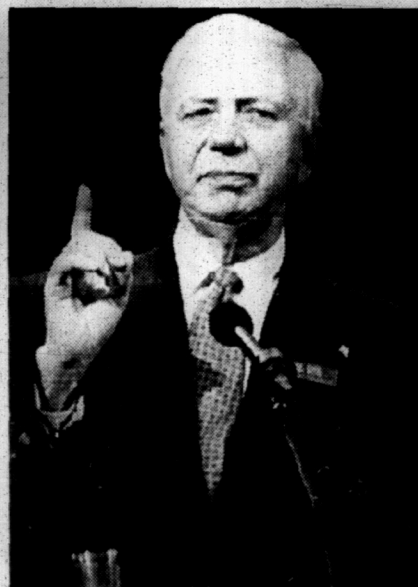
YOUR GIFT:



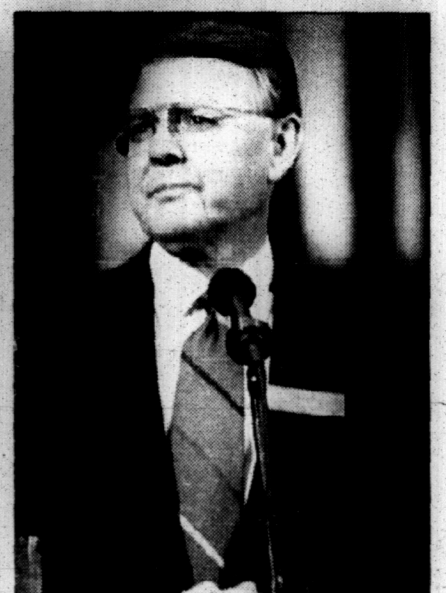
Jerry Rankin, president
Foreign Mission Board



Bill Blanchard, chairman
FMB Board of Trustees



Avery Willis, senior v.p.
FMB Overseas Operations



Frank Gunn, pastor
First Church, Biloxi



Ann-Lynn (left) and Moses Cheng Pan (center) of Cupertino, California, missionary appointees with Cooperative Services International, enjoy refreshment with Frances Smira of First Church, Jackson, at a reception in the Latimer House on the campus of Mississippi College in Clinton. The reception honored participants in the Dec. 8 missionary appointment service at First Church, Jackson. (Photo by Carl M. White)



Jack Glaze (second from left) retired New Orleans Seminary professor, and his wife Jean (left) talk with Gulfport native Brad Roderick (right) and his wife Gretchen after the Dec. 8 missionary appointment service at First Church, Jackson. The Rodericks were appointed to serve as church planters in southern Asia. Brad Roderick served as Glaze's graduate assistant at New Orleans Seminary. The Glazes are former missionaries to Argentina. (Photo by William H. Perkins Jr.)

Dying churches don't mean dying ministry

By Carl M. White
Associate Editor

Final in a series

There is a consensus among many pastors that a church that stays in a transitional community will eventually die.

They might not say it out loud, but that is what is felt. It will be said this way in the halls outside a pastor's conference: "You don't want to go to 'Such and Such' church because it is in a bad location."

While most pastors would agree with the statement that God can grow a church anywhere, most would also acknowledge the reality that one of the most important factors in church growth is location. A bad location can mean death!

Evidence of this can be found in cities and towns all over the nation.

Within Mississippi, formerly thriving church buildings can be found that are now being used as everything from an office complex to a storage facility.

These realities cause reflection on the mission and nature of the church. As the agent of the Great Commission, is it ever God's will that a church die?

However one may answer that question, dying churches are a reality. While that is not a happy thought, some argue it is part of a normal life-cycle.

Churches are born, churches grow, and churches die. It happens over 6,000 times a year in the United States, according to "Leadership" magazine.

Though a church may close its doors, does that mean the ministry at that location is over?

Bobby Perry says "no." He is director of missions for Gulf Coast Association, which consists of Hancock, Harrison, and Stone counties along the Gulf of Mexico.

He can point to several churches which are closed, yet ministry still continues.

Bay View Church closed its doors a little over a decade ago. The membership moved away.

The property was turned over to the association. Soon, it was open again as a Vietnamese congregation.

The same is true of Forrest Avenue Church. Closing its doors because of declining membership, the property was turned over to the association, which in turn transferred the property to a thriving Korean congregation.

Bay View and Forrest Avenue churches no longer exist, but the buildings are still in use for the work of the Kingdom. The ministry continues.

When Robinson Street Church of Jackson was founded in 1950, it was on the edge of

the growing city. On the corner of Ellis Avenue and Robinson Street, the church enjoyed many years of meaningful ministry in the community.

After the initial building program, two more buildings followed.

Then the community started to change. In less than 20 years it went from a new, high growth area to a transitional area. The church declined for many years, but managed to

has grown to \$740,988.

Though Robinson Street Church no longer exists, the legacy of the church continues to support the ministry of these four institutions. Since 1987, the Robinson Street Church trust fund has distributed \$103,411.16 to the Children's Village; \$51,705.56 to the BSU; \$171,026.20 to Mississippi College; and \$71,592.39 to Metro Association.

A total of \$397,735.31 has

ness. It also had its decline.

That life cycle did not end the work of God's kingdom. Neither will the life cycle of any other single local church.

Secondly, as Baptists we believe that the church is local in nature. We also believe that the local church is autonomous.

Thus, there is no higher ecclesiastical authority to decide the fate of a local church than the congregation itself.

If it is God's will that a given church stay where it is, relocate, or close its doors, it is a determination only the local congregation, under the Lordship of Christ, can make.

It is a lot easier to sit at a safe distance and judge such a decision than it is to make such a decision.

Concerning the event recorded in Mat. 16, when Jesus looked at Simon Peter and said "You are the rock, and upon this rock I will build my church," there is common consensus among believers that Jesus started something.

He founded the church, and the mission of the church is the Great Commission, to tell the world about Jesus.

Thus, of central importance is that a witness and ministry for Christ remain in a community, not whether that ministry bears the name "So and So" Baptist Church.

People change and communities change. This is a cultural reality.

Every human being is a sinner and needs a personal, saving relationship with Jesus Christ. This is a spiritual reality.

The church is charged with the responsibility of proclaiming the unchanging message of the Gospel in a constantly changing context. That is a theological reality.

Within these realities there are churches that stay, there are churches that relocate, and there are churches that die.

Options for churches in transitional communities

- ◇ maintain the status quo
- ◇ relocate to greener pastures
- ◇ develop satellite locations
- ◇ merge with another church
- ◇ change intentionally to reflect the community
- ◇ death

David Trimble, *Leadership*, "Nine options in a changing neighborhood," Vol. XI: 2, pp. 104-111.

carry on.

Eventually, reality set in. Robinson Street Church was going to die.

In 1987, the church closed its doors, sold the property to an African-American congregation, and used the proceeds to establish a trust fund with the Mississippi Baptist Foundation.

It was established so that the proceeds would be distributed by the following formula: 26 percent to the Baptist Children's Village; 13 percent to the Baptist Student Union (BSU) of Mississippi; 43 percent to Mississippi College (MC); and 18 percent to the Metro Association.

At the beginning the fund had a balance of \$591,874.47. As of September 30, 1996, the fund

been distributed in the past 10 years.

Was it God's will that these churches die? Two important considerations figure into any attempt to answer that question.

Both have to do with the nature of the church.

It must first be recognized that the church and the Kingdom of God are not one and the same.

The rise and fall of any one individual church is not the same as the rise and fall of God's Kingdom.

There have been many great congregations over the centuries since that day in Caesarea Philippi when Jesus founded the church.

Spurgeon's church in London had its rise to great-

North Jackson Church's unique ministry

By Carl M. White
Associate Editor

With the exception of the pastor, minister of music and their families, North Jackson Church is African-American.

Bill Patrick, however, is not your typical Southern Baptist pastor, and this is certainly not your typical Southern Baptist Church.

North Jackson Church was started in 1970 by a group that split away from Crestwood Church on Bailey Avenue.

They left Crestwood to escape the racial transition that was closing in around that church's community. However, with in a few years North Jackson's neighborhood was changing, also.

The original charter stated that the church would not

accept non-white members, Patrick said.

One pastor refused to accept the church's call unless that clause was removed. It was.

A few years later, as some of the first African-Americans began moving into the community, a black woman decided she was going to worship at her neighborhood church.

"She came one Sunday prepared for a fight," Patrick said. "Instead, someone put their arm around her and accepted her."

That was the beginning of a transformation that is carried forward by the current pastor and staff.

Bill Patrick is a native of Mississippi. He came back home from California after a career in the Army and after graduating from Golden Gate Seminary.

"I had a vision to come back to

Mississippi and start a multi-cultural work," he said.

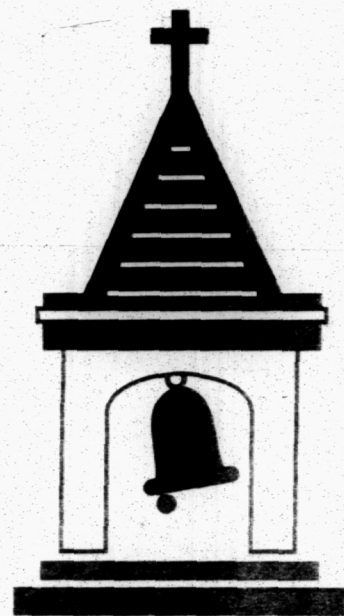
Patrick has been at North Jackson Church now for seven years.

His vision for the church is that it will be a training ground for people of all races and cultures to learn to love one another and work together for the Kingdom.

"I have a personal vision to do all I can to break down racial, gender and denominational barriers," Patrick said.

He is currently president of the Jackson Clergy Network, a bi-racial, inter-denominational fellowship of Jackson area ministers who meet monthly.

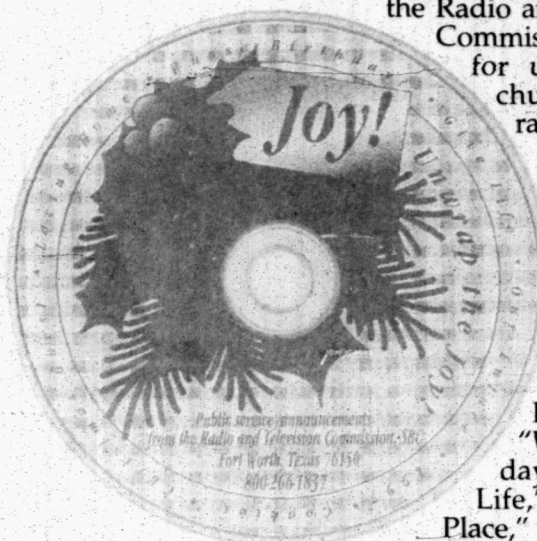
"We do not have a niche in the state convention or the association," he said. "We are unique — an all black church with a mostly white staff."



Churches on the move

RTVC radio spots offered to local churches

FORT WORTH, Texas (BP) — Eight 30-second holiday radio spots have been produced by the Radio and Television Commission (RTVC) for use by local churches and radio stations.



The spots, available on compact disc (CD), are titled "Cookies," "Christmas Guest," "Loving Home," "Whose Birthday," "Give Life," "Extra Place," "Our Future" and "1997."

"Each spot provides a Christian holiday message and has been produced so that a local church can add a brief message at the end," said Ed Malone, RTVC vice president of radio services.

Spots prepared for and sent directly to stations close with statements such as, "Brought to you by your Southern Baptists friends," but special CDs have been prepared so churches can personalize their spots.

"We encourage local churches to add their own brief message to the end of each spot," Malone said. "A CD with all eight spots is available to churches at no cost. A church can use as many of the spots as it chooses and can work with local radio stations in personalizing the messages."

Churches wanting the spots for use in their area are encouraged to contact Stan Grubb, RTVC church media consultant, at 1-800-292-2287.

"Our radio people have produced some wonderful spots in the past," said Lisa Young, RTVC director of radio marketing, "but I think these take us to

a new plateau of excellence. They appeal to a wide range of listeners and touch on timely Christian topics such as loneliness, the importance of family and the true meaning of Christmas."

Young said the spots have been sent to more than 11,000 radio stations.

BR holiday schedule

Due to postal regulations limiting "The Baptist Record" to 50 issues per year, the newspaper does not publish on the weeks of July 4 and Christmas. The final 1996 issue will be dated Thursday, Dec. 19, while the first issue of 1997 will be dated Thursday, Jan. 2. All news, information, and advertising orders for the Jan. 2 issue must arrive in the offices of "The Baptist Record" by Thursday, Dec. 19.

Also, postal delivery of the Jan. 2 issue of "The Baptist Record" may be delayed in some areas due the federal holiday on Jan. 1.

Drunk driving is theme of RTVC radio spot

FORT WORTH, Texas (BP) — The holiday season is an opportune time for a church to make a statement to its community.

Each of eight radio spots produced by the Radio and Television Commission can help a church do just that.

The following, for example, is the transcript of the RTVC holiday spot addressing drunk driving:

DRIVER: (SINGING WITH RECKLESS ABANDON. IT IS OBVIOUS HE HAS HAD TOO MUCH TO DRINK.) Deck the halls with boughs of holly,

SOUND: CAR MOTOR STARTS ... INTERIOR PERSPECTIVE.

DRIVER (CONTINUING): Fa-la-la-la, la-la-la-la.

WIFE (CONCERNED): Honey, let me drive! You've had too much to drink!

(CUT CAR SOUNDS)

ANNOUNCER (SOFT DELIVERY, CLOSE TO MIKE): Every 30 seconds, someone is killed in an alcohol-related car crash.

(RESUME CAR SOUNDS)

DRIVER (SINGING): 'Tis the season to be jolly.

WIFE (GETTING FRANTIC) Stop the car and let me drive!

(CUT ALL SOUNDS)

ANNOUNCER: During the holiday season, the rate goes up alarmingly.

(RESUME SOUNDS)

SOUND: CAR SWERVING AT HIGH SPEED.

HUSBAND (SINGING): Don we now our gay apparel ...

WIFE (SCREAMING OVER HIS SINGING): You're going too fast! Look out for that curve!

SOUND: LOUD SCREECH THAT STOPS JUST BEFORE THE CRASH.

(MOMENT OF SILENCE)

ANNOUNCER: The best gift you can give your family this year is life — YOURS!

A reminder from ... (LOCAL CHURCHES CAN ADD THEIR NAMES)

Suzanne's face ups mission offering by 35%

By Mark Kelly
SBC Foreign Mission Board

ASHEVILLE, N.C. — A burst of new enthusiasm for foreign missions propelled Merrimon Avenue Church far past their goal for the 1995 Lottie Moon Christmas Offering.

The Asheville, N.C., congregation beat their \$35,000 target by more than \$12,000, by "putting a face" on missions.

The face was that of Suzanne Barden, a 38-year-old agricultural missionary in Ethiopia. Barden, a Virginia native, was an active member of the Merrimon Avenue Church when the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board (FMB) appointed her to Ethiopia in 1993.

"A lot of people in churches today weren't brought up in children's missions groups and Woman's Missionary Union (WMU), so they don't always understand how Southern Baptist missions works," said Frances Underwood, longtime WMU director at Merrimon Avenue. "But when you talk to them about someone they know and put a specific need in front of them, they get excited."

The church was firmly established in a missions giving tradition, said deacon chairman Jesse Messer.

"Billy Cline, our pastor for 30 years, always made missions a priority," Messer said. "We knew that when we gave to missions, we had a part in what the Lord was doing all around the world."

The 2,700-member church had not really challenged itself in missions giving for several years, said Mike Smith, a church member and local businessman who has served as a FMB trustee since 1989.

After meeting dollar goals in the low 30-thousands for several years and "only gaining a little bit each time, I felt we were just giving a token amount," Smith said. "Overseas missions trips and serving as a FMB trustee really opened my eyes to the needs in the world. I knew we could do more as a church."

When the Week of Prayer for foreign missions began, Smith approached pastor Bill Bigham, who had come to the church just a few months earlier, and asked for a few minutes on Sunday to challenge the congregation toward a higher goal.

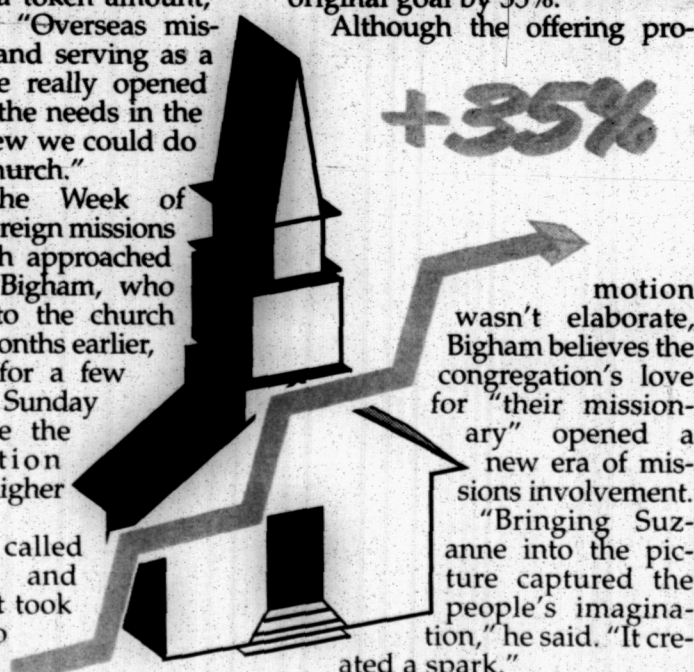
"I had called the FMB and found out it took \$46,170 to support Suzanne

Barden's ministry in Ethiopia for a year," Smith said. "I just got up and told the congregation that she's our missionary, that we sent her out and we ought to take care of her needs."

"We had a Christmas tree at the front of the sanctuary and

we were lighting a strand of lights for each \$100 we received, but things had been kind of sluggish at first," recalled pastor Bigham. "Within a week after Mike made his challenge, though, we had exceeded the goal by almost \$10,000." When the offering was totaled, the church had given \$47,359, beating their original goal by 35%.

Although the offering pro-



important times in the history of missions. God is opening doors all over the world," Rankin said. "We praise God that he is calling new missionaries to walk through those doors and that their churches are standing right beside them."

When churches "adopt" a missionary and make a commitment to keep in close touch, missionaries are assured they have brothers and sisters at home who are behind them all the way, he said.

Rallying around Suzanne Barden not only energized Merrimon Avenue church to give more to the foreign missions offering, it also galvanized the congregation in other ways. Positions on a volunteer team headed for Ethiopia filled quickly. Church members began praying for the needs Barden shared in her monthly newsletter. Individuals committed to mail regular letters of encouragement to Ethiopia. People gave to buy supplies for Barden's ministry.

"I like the idea of being a partner with a missionary on the field," said Frances Underwood.

"There are things every church can do to help. Even a small church can help dig a well or sponsor a nutrition class for new mothers.

"If we name things people can do, it helps them get excited," she added. "When we put a face with the dollar bill, that makes it personal."

State conventions meet around the country

ALABAMA

Ala. Baptists again address Samford, Mobile universities

BIRMINGHAM, Ala. (BP) — A two-year controversy over Samford University's election of trustees peacefully ended during the 174th annual meeting of the Alabama Baptist State Convention.

A "Covenant of Sacred Trust" between the convention and Samford passed overwhelmingly by the 1,938 messengers who attended the Nov. 19-20 meeting at Birmingham's Shades Mountain Church. A few concerns and questions during the floor debate lasted less than 20 minutes.

Messengers unanimously approved a \$32.12 million base budget and a challenge budget of nearly \$33.5 million. The 1996 base budget was \$31 million. Morrison praised Alabama Baptists for record giving in 1996, the third year Alabama Baptists have given above the base budget.

Alabama Baptist ministries will receive 57.7% of the budget; Southern Baptist Convention national and international ministries, 42.3%. The percentages are unchanged from the current budget.

In the election of convention president, Leon Ballard, pastor of 229-member York Church in western Alabama the past 14 years, won a 60-40% margin over Mike McLemore, pastor of 2,000-member Lakeside Church, Birmingham. Ballard won 612 of 1,036 votes cast.

Ballard has served as ABSC first vice president the past two years.

ARKANSAS

Arkansas messengers adopt Ouachita reconciliation plan

LITTLE ROCK, Ark. (BP) — More than 1,500 Arkansas Baptist messengers gathered Nov. 19-20 to address the future relationship between the Arkansas Baptist State Convention and Ouachita Baptist University (OBU).

Responding to an Oct. 10 action by OBU trustees to become a self-perpetuating board, messengers voted 801-456 to approve a compromise between the university and the convention. The action sets in motion a two-year procedure to formally amend OBU's trustee selection process.

In other action, messengers approved a unified budget formula for 1998-2002 which specifies any percentage increase to SBC causes will be based on the average five-year increase of CP gifts from local churches.

Messengers also approved extending Arkansas Baptists' missions partnership with the European Baptist Convention through the year 1999 and adopted a series of priority projects to highlight the state convention's 1997 "Strengthen the Family" emphasis.

COLORADO

Colorado Baptists increase CP giving for global causes

COLORADO SPRINGS, Colo. (BP) — Giving to Southern Baptist national and international ministries was increased by a half-percent of Colorado's Cooperative Program budget when 347 messengers met Nov. 12-13 at Circle Drive Church, Colorado Springs.

Of \$1.5 million in anticipated CP giving from the 331 churches in the Colorado Baptist General Convention in 1997, 29% will be forwarded to SBC causes, up a half-percent from the current CP allocation. Colorado Baptist ministries will receive 79%.

The convention's overall 1997 budget will be \$3,361,400, a 9% increase over the current year.

All officers of the convention were re-elected: president, Davis Cooper, pastor of University Baptist Church, Denver; and first vice president, James Vaughan, director of missions of the Grand Valley Association, Grand Junction.

ILLINOIS

African American elected as Ill. Baptist president

HARVEY, Ill. (BP) — Illinois Baptist messengers elected Gene Gibson president and adopted a new format for the annual meeting during the Illinois Baptist State Association's 90th annual meeting at St. Mark Missionary Baptist Church, Harvey, Nov. 6-8.

Gibson, pastor of Chicago's Mission of Faith Church, becomes the second African American to hold the office of president. Don Sharp, pastor of Chicago's Faith Tabernacle Church, held the position from 1982-1984.

Gibson had served as ISBA vice president the past two years.

The convention, which registered 404 messengers, also passed seven resolutions, including appreciation for Gene Wilson, former executive director now on disability. Other resolutions included prayer support for elected leaders, the needs of forgotten

seniors, and Christian behavior toward a sinful world.

MARYLAND-DELAWARE

Resolutions bylaws hamper Md./Del. messengers' stances

HAGERSTOWN, Md. (BP) — Messengers to the Baptist Convention of Maryland/Delaware (BCM/D) meeting in Hagerstown, MD on Nov. 11-12, passed a \$4,978,568 budget, an increase of \$171,736 over 1996. Cooperative Program receipts will be divided 51% for BCM/D ministries and 41% for Southern Baptist Convention national and international causes, after the expanded annuity preferred item has been subtracted. The allocation percentages remain unchanged.

In other business, messengers approved new Baptist Mission Foundation bylaws. Messengers to the 1995 BCM/D requested new articles of incorporation and bylaws from the BMF, the convention's money managing agency.

There were 406 messengers and 122 visitors in attendance. The 1997 annual meeting will be Nov. 10-11 at the Holiday Inn on Solomon's Island in southern Maryland.

NEW ENGLAND

New England Baptists target reductions in budget deficit

ANDOVER, Mass. (BP) — Messengers attending the 14th Baptist Convention of New England annual meeting approved a \$2.46 million budget for 1997 and a financial development plan, while celebrating progress of the "Building for the Future" capital campaign.

The Nov. 14-15 sessions at the Ramada Hotel Rolling Green, Andover, Mass., drew 200 messengers and guests.

The \$2,459,659 budget will challenge the 200 churches and missions in the convention in their giving to New England Baptist causes, in that the budget is \$196,485, or 8%, below projected income. The current budget of \$2.5 million entailed a deficit of \$289,229 when it was adopted last year. Messengers adopted a plan to reduce the annual deficit to \$72,101 by 2000.

NEW YORK

New York Baptists reduce '97 budget by 4 percent

ALEXANDRIA BAY, N.Y. (BP) — A budget reduction of 4.17% was approved by 204 messengers attending the Nov. 7-8 annual meeting of the Baptist Convention of New York.

New York's total budget is \$2,590,398 for 1997, a decrease of 4.17% from 1996. New York's Cooperative Program gifts, from 352 churches and missions, are expected to total \$585,000 in 1997 of which 24% is allocated to the Southern Baptist Convention's national and international ministries, a 2.75% decrease from 1996. The reduced budget levels reflect some financial difficulties in recent years at the state convention.

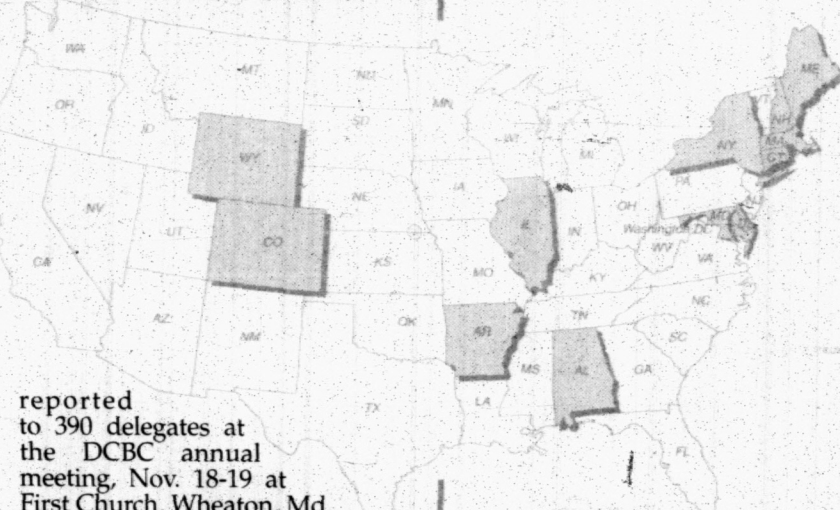
In a three-nominee ballot, the

convention elected as president James Guenther, pastor of Trinity Church, Niskayuna. In a two-nominee ballot for first vice president, Ernesto Chaparro, pastor of Canaan Church, Corona, was elected.

WASHINGTON D.C.

Progressive Baptists may give D.C. convention 3-way alignment

WASHINGTON (BP) — The possibility of adding the predominantly African-American Progressive National Baptist Convention, Inc., for a "triplex alignment" of the District of Columbia Baptist Convention (DCBC) was



Part 2

reported to 390 delegates at the DCBC annual meeting, Nov. 18-19 at First Church, Wheaton, Md.

A three-member ad hoc committee was approved by the convention's executive board at its October meeting to explore the possibility. Currently, the DCBC is affiliated with the Southern Baptist Convention and the American Baptist Churches in the U.S.A.

Delegates approved a \$1,184,098 budget for 1997 which represents less than a 1% increase over the current year. However, gifts to the SBC Cooperative Program and to ABC/USA United Missions will increase by 2% of budget, for a total of 31% of all undesignated monies going to missions. Expected 1997 Cooperative Program receipts should exceed \$163,000.

WYOMING

Wyo. Baptists mark 20 years by John Thomason, Charles Crim

GILLETTE, Wyo. (BP) — John Thomason and Charles Crim of the Wyoming Southern Baptist Convention were honored for 20 years of service during the convention's annual meeting, Nov. 13-14 at Antelope Valley Church, Gillette.

Thomason has been the convention's executive director 14 years, serving the previous six years as director of teaching and training with the former Northern Plains Baptist Convention. Crim has been the convention's director of associational missions 14 years, previously serving in the same post with the Northern Plains convention six years.

A 1997 budget of \$1,007,000 was adopted, roughly the same as the current year. Of anticipated Cooperative Program giving by the churches of \$340,000, 29% will be allocated to Southern Baptist Convention national and international ministries, up a half-percent of budget over the current year.



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Missionary parents host missionary parents

By Edna Ellison
Mississippi WMU

The Mississippi Missionary Parents' Fellowship (MPF) hosted a supper Dec. 8 prior to the missionary appointment service at First Church, Jackson, for the parents of the new missionaries that were appointed later that evening.

Members of MPF — the only group of its kind in the Southern Baptist Convention — paired with parents of new missionaries whose children will serve in the same countries as MPF members' children.

They discussed travel, mail service, and ways to nurture their missionary children and

families over long distances.

Jimmy Walker, MPF president and pastor of Tiplersville Church, Tiplersville, and Marjean Patterson, executive director of the Mississippi Woman's Missionary Union (WMU) welcomed the diverse group, which included grandchildren and other family members of missionaries.

Darlene Breland of Columbia, Mississippi WMU vice president, and Edna Ellison of Jackson, WMU/MPF liaison, led the families in fellowship groups after supper was concluded.

The supper, which was held in the Skyroom of the Baptist Building in Jackson, was prepared by members of Alta Woods Church, Jackson.

For more information on MPF, contact Ellison at Mississippi WMU, P.O. Box 530, Jackson, MS 39205-0530. Telephone: (601) 968-3800 or toll-free outside Jackson (800) 748-1651.



PARENT TO PARENT — Marjean Patterson (standing), executive director of Mississippi Woman's Missionary Union, addresses the crowd gathered Dec. 8 in the Skyroom of the Baptist Building in Jackson to honor the parents of new missionaries appointed later that evening at First Church, Jackson. The Mississippi Missionary Parents' Fellowship hosted the supper. (Photo by William H. Perkins Jr.)

NAMES IN THE NEWS



Freeny Church, Carthage, licensed **MeShay Lee** as minister of youth on Sept. 22. MeShay, daughter of Zane and Jodie Lee of Carthage, is a student at William Carey College. Pictured with Lee is John Adams, pastor.

Danny Lanier, evangelist, Little Rock, will be in concert at Antioch Church, Columbus, Dec. 14, at 7 p.m. He will also speak on Harvest Day, Dec. 15, at 11 a.m. Edward N. Knox is pastor.



Broadmoor Church, Gulf Coast Association, ordained **John W. Myrick** as deacon on Nov. 17. Pictured are Myrick, left, and Gerald H. Walker, pastor.

50TH ANNIVERSARY

Editor:

Oakland Heights Church, Meridian, will be celebrating its 50th anniversary on Feb. 15-16, 1997. At this time, we are trying to locate all former members and staff. If you were a member of Oakland Heights Church, or on staff at any time, contact Hazel (Smith) Brumfield at (601) 483-0461 (home), 693-6156 (work), or write to the Steering Committee, c/o Mike Russell, 5718 5th St., Meridian, MS 39307, or call (601) 482-5583.

Hazel Brumfield

SPECIAL THANKS

Editor:

I want to express my deep appreciation to each one who attended the Mississippi Baptist Pastor's Conference. To each one who prayed and to all who gave generously to the love offerings.

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

A special thank you to the staff at First Church, Jackson. They provided nursery workers, musicians, and their facilities. Each time I called any of them they worked hard to help. I am grateful for MBCB exec-

utive director Bill Causey's office for sending me a list of names and addresses of every Mississippi pastor. The employees in the Baptist Building were a great help anytime I called on them.

Also, the Baptist Book Store in Jackson deserves a big thank you for printing the brochures, and "The Baptist Record" for their advertising of the conference.

Let's pray for Kara Blackard, the president of next year's Pastor's Conference, and support him like you supported this one.

Clark Stewart
Crystal Springs

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Hudsons provide Carey with largest gift

The largest gift in the history of William Carey College was made Dec. 5 by Angela and Bill Hudson Jr. of Lumberton, who donated their 14,000 square-foot house and adjoining acreage to the Baptist-affiliated school in Hattiesburg.

Known as "Pecan Shadows," the 25-room colonial-style house was built in the 1950's by the family of Houston Bass Jr.

The property, just off Interstate 59 in south Lamar County, is surrounded by pecan trees and manicured grounds, and is valued in excess of \$1.5 million.

Carey will utilize the estate as a center for seminars on the American work ethic and free

enterprise; spiritual retreats and conferences on family values; cultural and fine arts programs; fundraising events; and possibly classes and programs to serve the education needs of south Mississippi, according to Carey Chancellor Jim Edwards.

Edwards pointed out that all the planned uses are in keeping with the life priorities of Bill Hudson Jr., president and chief executive officer of Hudson's Salvage, Inc.

"A deep faith and firm commitment to serve God, a strong love for his wife and children, and an incredible capacity for working hard and leading others to expand an already suc-

cessful, family-oriented business sums up a lot of... Bill Hudson's life.

"He is also a bivocational preacher who is committed to a worldwide missions program of his church," Edwards said.

The donation came about as the Hudson family began planning a move from Mississippi to Indiana, the headquarters of the international missions program of Christ Gospel Church, Edwards said.

"It is our hope and prayer that our dream house will be converted and used to help build and further the dreams of many young men and women who seek to grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ," said Bill Hudson Jr.

Carey will establish "The Genesis Center for Work and Service" at Pecan Shadows Farm, where students who want to work their way through college instead of borrowing money will constitute a signifi-

cant portion of the support staff for the seminars, conferences, and retreats that will be held there, Edwards explained.

"This will enhance the opportunities for students to learn the values that constitute the work ethic the college espouses. Dependability, conscientious attention to detail, and willingness to undertake tasks at hand are qualities everyone needs to succeed," he said.

In addition to Pecan Shadows Farm, the college maintains three regional campuses in Hattiesburg, Gulfport, and New Orleans.

The Hudson gift is part of the "Great Expectations" program, an upcoming capital and scholarship fundraising initiative that will be kicked off in 1997.

For more information, contact William Carey College at 498 Tuscan Ave., Hattiesburg, MS 39401-5499. Telephone: (601) 582-5051.

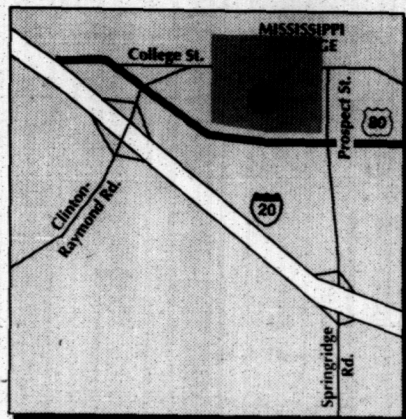
Youth evangelism Conf. set for Dec. 30-31 at MC

"How Deep is the Love of Christ," is the theme of the Youth Evangelism Conference set for Dec. 30-31, at Mississippi College (MC) in Clinton.

The Youth Evangelism Conference annually attracts more than 3,000 Mississippi high school- and college-age students.

Features of the conference will include a concert by Wes King of Warsaw, Ind.; speaker Keith Naylor of Stone Mountain, Ga.; music leader Paul Horton of Lithia Springs, Ga.; and drama by Mog and Wog (Randall and Arinee Glass) of Boynton Beach, Fla.

Registration begins at noon on Monday, Dec. 30, with the first session at 2 p.m. The conference ends at 3 p.m. on Dec. 31.



Pre-registration with the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board's Evangelism Department is requested by Dec. 16, although not required. However, only pre-registrants will receive a free breakfast at 7:15 p.m. on Tuesday, hosted by MC.

To pre-register, write Evangelism Department, P.O. Box 530, Jackson, MS 39205-0530. Telephone: (601) 968-3800 or toll-free outside Jackson (800) 748-1651. Registration cost is \$5 per person.

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BAPTIST COLLEGE NEWS

William Carey College honored Karen Burns Gray, class of '78, and 65 other missionaries at a Brick Dedication Ceremony. The ceremony, part of Homecoming activities, recognized the work of Carey students and alumni who have served this year in countries around the world. Gray opened the House of Hope, an AIDS hospice in Vitoria, Brazil, in 1995. Her husband, Tony, a Carey alumnus and co-director

of the House of Hope, spoke about their work in Brazil.

Mississippi College will hold registration for the 1997 spring semester, beginning Jan. 6. The first day of classes will be held on Jan. 8. For registration information call the Office of Undergraduate Admissions (601) 925-3240; the Office of Graduate Studies 925-3225; or the Office of the Registrar, 925-3210.



William Carey College crowned its 1996 Homecoming queen at the half-time ceremonies of the Crusader basketball game recently. The court, pictured (left to right), is freshman maid Kimberly Morris, Amite, La.; basketball maid Carla Simmons, Houston, Texas; junior maid Tangie Moudy, Braxton; senior maid Alyssa Hurst, Eight Mile, Ala.; sophomore maid Robin Muirhead, Richland; Queen Dee Dee Fortenberry, Columbia; and senior maid Kim Funches, Sumrall.

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Missionary News

Robert and Jamie Luper, Baptist representatives to Morocco, are in language study for one year and may be addressed at P.O. Box 472, Maadi, Cairo, 11728, Egypt. He was born in Hattiesburg, and considers Waco, Texas, his hometown. The former Jamie Pool of Texas, she was born in San Angelo and considers Athens her hometown.

STAFF CHANGES

First Church, Maben, has called **J. Roy McComb** as pastor. He previously pastored First Church, Lenoir City, Tenn. Churches pastored in Mississippi were First, Sardis; First, Pearl; and First, Columbia

George S. Kelly, former pastor of First Church, Lyman, Gulf Coast Association, has been called as interim pastor of Lower Valley, First Church, Springfield, Ohio.

*In a world
filled with
confusion...
Is there any
hope?*

God's desire is to give you
hope.

*"For I am not ashamed of the
gospel, for it is the power of
God for salvation to everyone
who believes..."*
Romans 1:16

Sin robs us of this life of
hope!

*"For the wages of sin is
death..."*
Romans 6:23

Jesus cares for you!

*"But God demonstrates His
own love toward us, in that
while we were yet sinners,
Christ died for us."*
Romans 5:8

It's your choice.

*You must decide for yourself if
you are willing to turn from
your sins and ask Jesus into
your heart.*

*"If you confess with your
mouth Jesus as Lord and
believe in your heart that
God raised Him from the
dead, you shall be saved."*
Romans 10:9

If you make a decision for
Jesus Christ today, contact a
local Southern Baptist church
for spiritual guidance.

JUST FOR THE RECORD

Algoma Church, Algoma, will have its annual Drive-Thru Nativity on Dec. 13 and 14, 6-9:30 p.m. It consists of five scenes associated with the birth of Jesus. For more information, call (601) 489-5846.

"The Glory of God" a Christmas drama, will be presented at Easthaven Church, Richland, on Dec. 15 at 6 p.m.

Bob Carlisle will be in concert with special guest Tammy

Trent at First Church, Ridgeland, Dec. 13 at 7:30 p.m. For more information, call (601) 630-2900.

Rolling Creek Church, Quitman, will present a Christmas musical entitled "The King of Kings" on Dec. 14 and 15 at 7 p.m.

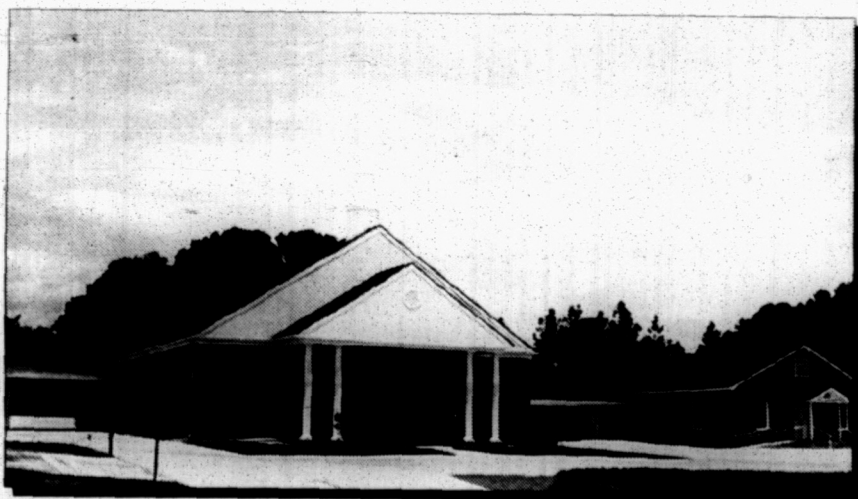
Griffith Memorial Church, Jackson, will present "The Music of Christmas" on Dec. 15 at 6 p.m. For more information call the church at (601) 372-7812.



GAs of Green's Creek Church, Petal, were recognized on Oct. 6. Pictured, are Whitney Smith, Brandy Murphy, Bethany Johnston, Alisha Powell, Amy Hamm, Molly Lott, Monica Spell, Kimberly Murphy, Penny Gatlin, Nicki Gatlin, Katie Collins, Candice Weldon, and Jennifer Pierce; Glenda Manning, Janet Hamm, and Shar Soldin, workers. Michael C. Routon is pastor.



Antioch Church, Union, is expanding its sanctuary and adding an educational building with more Sunday School rooms. Ground breaking services for the new facilities were held on Oct. 13. Pictured from left are Wayne Bishop, minister of music; Steve Moore, associate pastor; Stanley Bishop, chairman of building committee; Jeanetta Rigdon; Nancy Joyner; Sam Boler, and James Young, pastor.



County Line Church, Union had their first services in a new sanctuary, nursery and educational space on Easter Sunday, April 7, 1996. The new building was dedicated on June 2, 1996. Barron Pilgrim is pastor.



Fifteen Baptist Men from Union County Association helped First Church, Allen Oklahoma, in September by demolishing an old two-story educational building to provide more parking space. The 1940s building had been replaced in 1995 by a new structure. Workers pictured are (kneeling, from left): Tommy Peters, Myrtle; James Grisham, Myrtle; Johnny Garrison, Myrtle; Leon Wilson, Myrtle; Malcolm Rhea, Myrtle; Frank Morris, Guntown; Tommy Hogue, Allen, OK. Standing are (from left): Gene Dunahue, Etta; James Shirley, Myrtle; Marvin Cox, Blue Springs; Dennis Sappenfield, Allen, OK; James Knighton, Myrtle; Larry Wood, New Albany; Raymond Owen, Potts Camp; Billy Foley, Myrtle; Donnie Johnson and H. C. Spain, Allen, OK; Jimmy Baker, Myrtle; Harold Davis, Allen OK; Steve Fitzgerald, Ingomar.



Emmanuel Church, Jones Assoc., dedicates construction

Members of Emmanuel Church, Jones Association (above), recently dedicated the construction of a new worship center at the present church site. The center will be constructed adjacent to the present educational building and will seat around 240 people. The design will be traditional and will correspond with the educational building. Building committee chairman is Clark Temple. The church has raised some \$50,000 for the project, which is scheduled for completion next summer. Additional commitments of some \$1,500 per month have been made until the building is debt-free. The church was started as a mission of Glade Church, Glade, in 1954. The youth and leaders (below) with Kenny Herrington presented a check in the amount of \$1,200 toward the building fund. In a statement the youth indicated that they are interested in having a strong church in the next century. Charles Gordon is pastor.



MISSIONARIES

From Churches with Love

FAMILY BIBLE SERIES

Receive God's message

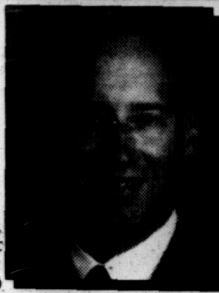
Luke 2:1-20

I can never read this passage without Linus coming to mind. In "A Charlie Brown Christmas" it is he that strolls to the middle of the stage to give the "real meaning" of Christmas. He quotes Luke's passage as it is selected here for our lesson this week. I always felt every year that just hearing him recite this passage I would then be in the Christmas spirit. It's the truth and the meaning of the passage that really does it.

It does seem only fitting that the angels would appear to humble shepherds with this "glad tiding of great joy." In the darkness of the night this shining imagery of angels must have been blinding to say the least. They were minding their business when God broke

through. Remember, one of the purposes of the shepherds was to care for the flocks which would be used to offer as sacrifices unto the Lord in the temple. To be made aware that soon their jobs would be in danger may have been God's way of personally expressing his concern. I wonder if any of them tendered their resignation when they learned of the Christ child being born?

All people, including themselves, were being offered a gift from God which would result in hearts of joy (v. 10). After comforting these frightened shepherds the angel's news moved right to the point. "A Savior has been born to you;



Jim Phillips

he is Christ the Lord."

I am not so certain that they immediately understood everything that the angels told them. I do believe, however, that the walk to Bethlehem gave them time to think out loud and begin to put the news in perspective.

The glorious host of angels (vv.13-14) would have to have had an impact. Don't you just know that this band of angels was waiting for that first angel to bring the shepherds the news so that with unrestrained praise they could set the heavens singing? Note that following that heavenly orchestration, the shepherds quickly moved in response to their pounding hearts (v. 15-16). Their hearts were not disappointed. **They looked and they found** "Mary and Joseph and the baby lying in the manger."

I'm convinced that the shepherds immediately began shar-

ing the "good news" with those surrounding the stable there in Bethlehem (vv. 17-18). What must that testimony have sounded like? There's nothing like an excited heart trying to express to others about a fresh experience with the living God. **That just may be the best gift you can give this Christmas by telling them about the Savior!**

Have you ever wondered for yourself that this might be the Christmas that you receive the best gift that you could possibly receive? The gift I refer to is that of salvation. While you're still pondering what you might give or receive this year, maybe you need to ponder like the shepherds what God might be trying to show you. In our text, the shepherds both "heard and saw" what it was God was giving to them (v. 20). Their joy was obvious and their lives were never the same. You see, they found out that God often gets our attention not just to judge our sins but to offer his

help in the midst of our situation. The shepherds weren't anymore expecting a personal message from God than you might be now. But then that's how God often works.

God's invitation to all of us at Christmas is to come and see for ourselves what God has done for us. If he would make his appeal to simple shepherds in a field, he would also come to you and me wherever we are with the message of good news. No one is outside the realm of his invitation. Truth is, the message has been delivered to us all. It's now up to us to acknowledge God's gift of salvation and grace by receiving the gift. This Christmas, don't be one who only goes about giving gifts but also be one who can equally receive a gift. No greater gift could be offered to you this Christmas than the one God offers you in his Son.

Phillips is pastor, North Greenwood Church, Greenwood.

EXPLORE THE BIBLE

A supernatural disclosure

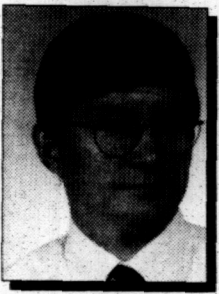
Matthew 16:13-20

Just who is Jesus of Nazareth? From the Twelve to Pontius Pilate, people have asked this question. In fact, Jesus himself asked this question of the Twelve one day.

The Big Question (16:13-15). Jesus had just arrived in the region of Caesarea Philippi, about thirty-five miles north of the Sea of Galilee. He wanted to know what opinion the Twelve had of him. Rather than simply ask them for their opinion, he led them into the discussion by first asking them what others were saying. He knew that people admired him and venerated him. People might not be inclined to tell their true opinion to Jesus. Perhaps the Twelve were closer to the people and had heard what they

were saying.

The reader will notice that three opinions were popular among the masses. Some thought that Jesus was John the Baptist. The crowds were aware of Herod's execution of John. Many surely remembered how John had preached a baptism of repentance and had openly challenged the religious authorities who presented themselves for baptism without having altered their lifestyles. They knew that John had baptized Jesus and then had faded into the background. Many people were sorry that John had died prematurely, believing that God had important work for him to do. As a result, some thought that Jesus may



Ronald Bishop

have been John come back to life.

Some thought Jesus was Elijah, the Old Testament prophet. Malachi 4:5 suggests that God would send Elijah to earth prior to the Day of the Lord. The Jews had come to expect that the Messiah would not be sent until Elijah first appeared. Jesus identified John the Baptist as the second Elijah. Still, some thought that Jesus was Elijah.

Others thought that Jesus simply was a great prophet like Jeremiah or Amos. Though many Jews thought that the period of God's revelation through the prophets had come to a close, others thought that Jesus stood in line with the other great prophets.

After getting the opinions that others had given to the Twelve, Jesus asked for their opinion. He forced them to think about who he was and also to tell what they thought.

The Right Answer (16:16).

Peter usually proved to be spokesman for the group, and this occasion was no exception. Peter's response was a brilliant affirmation of faith, known by scholars as the Caesarean Confession. Peter stated for the group that they believed Jesus to be more than any of the above-named people. He was the Christ, the Messiah, the unique Son of God. There were many prophets, but Jesus was in a class of his own.

The Wonderful Affirmation (16:17-19).

Jesus responded to Peter's confession by congratulating him, in a way, that he had come to this conclusion. Peter's opinion was not gotten by hearsay or popular vote. Instead, God had revealed to Peter who Jesus was. Jesus even commended the faith of Peter by saying that it was upon faith such as Peter's that Christ's church would be built. This faith can lead one to make great sacrifices, even one's life, for the kingdom if necessary.

The Curious Charge (16:20).

One of the puzzling aspects of Jesus' teaching is the secrecy. Books have been written investigating the messianic secret in the gospels. Some people say Jesus was using reverse psychology on the Twelve, knowing that people usually tell what we have been told in secret. Others say that Jesus did not want his secret revealed yet, but later. Others say that Jesus wanted people to learn for themselves of his messianic nature rather than being told by the Twelve. Whatever his reason, Jesus surprised the Twelve by telling them not to tell who he was.

Who is Jesus to you? A good preacher? A prophet? Some mysterious figure from the past who your friends say died for your sins? One of the most important questions you will ever answer is this one. Who is he?

Bishop teaches philosophy and religion at Jones County Junior College, Ellisville.

LIFE AND WORK

Gotta-have-it

Ex. 20; Josh. 7; Rom. 7; 2 Cor. 8

How should I relate to belongings? What if I selfishly want to keep what is mine and at the same time desire to have another person's possessions? That is covetousness!

Do not covet (Ex. 20:17). The Holman Bible Dictionary defines covet as "the inordinate desire to possess what belongs to another, usually tangible things; an ungoverned and selfish desire which threatens the basic right of others." God commanded His people not to covet. The previous four commandments dealt with outward actions, this commandment focuses on a person's feelings, desires, and motives.

Everything we have is a gift from God. When we envy someone else's job, money, family, or

opportunity, then we are coveting. To covet is to never be satisfied with what we have, and to want what others have. This can grow into envy and hatred. It can result in sinful actions against others. God was very plain; He said: "Do not covet."

The progression of covetousness (Josh. 7:1,19-21). Achan knew he was disobeying God when he took the devoted things. As a result, God was very angry (v.1). As a result of Achan's covetousness, the Israelites were



Cynthia Douglas

defeated in battle. God told Joshua to find the person who had stolen and deceived. When Joshua confronted Achan (v.19), he confessed to coveting and taking a beautiful garment, gold, and silver. Three important verbs in verse 21 express Achan's progression of sin: "I saw, I coveted, I took." As a result, Achan, his family, and his possessions were destroyed.

When we see something we desire which belongs to someone else, we must place that impulse under God's control. The progression of covetousness is deadly! Remember only Jesus can satisfy the soul.

The destructive nature of covetousness (Rom. 7:7-11). Paul urged the Christians in Rome to serve Christ in the Spirit. He described four characteristics of sin's destructive

nature: sin seizes the opportunity, sin deceives the person, sin brings forth all kinds of covetousness, and sin ends in spiritual death. God gave the law to man to reveal the nature of human sin. Paul testified how in his own life he was physically alive but sin had deceived and killed him spiritually (v.11). Paul said his understanding of sin came from the law and he specifically referred to the sin of coveting (v.7). The destructive nature of covetousness leads to dissatisfaction, stealing, even to murder. God gave the law to bring happiness in obedience but when sin reigns, the law brings misery and death.

Generosity: the antithesis of covetousness (2 Cor.8:1-4). Antithesis means the exact opposite, thus generosity is the direct opposite of coveting. In this passage, Paul is commending the Macedonian churches for being

generous while being in extreme poverty. Because of God's grace, they were able to help others in need. Why do adults have difficulty being generous today? Some reasons are selfishness, insensitivity to the plight of others, too deeply in personal debt, ignorance of God's teachings, and even covetousness! Hebrews 13:5 says: "Let your conduct be without covetousness, be content with such things as you have. For He Himself has said, 'I will never leave you nor forsake you.'" When believers grasp the full impact of God's amazing grace, they are empowered to set new priorities in their lives. As the hymn says: "All to Jesus I surrender, all to Him I freely give." The antithesis of "Gotta have it" is "Because I am a child of the King, I will share all of my inheritance!"

Douglas is a member of First Church, Columbus.

90-year-old still teaching Sunday School

By Chip Alford
Baptist Sunday School Board

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP) — Churches are scandalously short of Bible teachers, especially for children's and preschool classes.



SETTING THE STANDARD — Esther Catron helps Jaime Van Slyke learn a Scripture memory verse during Sunday School on a recent Sunday morning at First Church, Adrian, Mo. Catron is still going strong after 70 years of teaching Sunday School. (BP photo by Jim Veneman)

Shop, a business sandwiched between a martial arts school and a bowling alley and named after a niece who "had the prettiest hair you've ever seen."

Business isn't the only commitment for Esther. A devoted, active member of First Baptist Church of Adrian, she's taught children's Sunday school for 70 years.

"I just felt like the Lord led me to do it," she says, smiling.

"I've always liked children and I never had any of my own. So, I guess this kind of helped me fill that gap."

"And because I've had to study and prepare all these years, it's also helped me deepen myself in the Bible."

Currently department director for the first and second grade class, Esther still loves working with kids and they love Esther.

A visit to her classroom on Sunday morning confirms that. Whether its working with a young girl on a memory verse from the "Bible Learners" Life & Work quarterly, sending her class members a postcard when she goes on vacation, or simply handing out hugs, Esther is appreciated.

"I thought about giving it up last year. I mean, I thought maybe it was really time to turn it over to someone younger. But Jeweldine (Smith, a helper in her class and a former student), told me: 'Esther, you can't quit. You're the backbone of this department.'"

Esther, who recently attended her church's hayride and wiener roast, also sings in the choir, something she's done since age 12. And she continues to attend training seminars and events and Southern Baptist state and national conference centers.

"I was really bashful as a young girl, but Training Union helped me get out of that. I still

try to improve myself, learn something new."

Toward that end, Esther's also completed several discipleship courses in recent years, including "MasterLife," which she said helped her "really find myself," "The Mind of Christ," and "Experiencing God."

Esther knows about commitment in her personal life, too.

She was married only seven years to her late husband, Troy, when he was diagnosed with a brain tumor in 1933.

"It was quite a shock. He had to have surgery and it affected his speech."

Other than "uh huh" or "uh uh," Troy never spoke again and could only point at words and pictures in magazines or phone books to communicate.

Eventually, Esther helped her husband become trained to sell and repair refrigerators, accompanying him on deliveries so she could communicate with the customers.

Troy lived almost 60 years before his death in 1991 at age

93. While she now has more free time on her hands, Esther, who has no plans to retire, is hardly sitting still. She likes to travel, has visited Mexico, Alaska, Hawaii and Israel twice. She'd still like to visit Australia and Scotland, her late father's birthplace.

Oh yeah, in addition to her business and church responsibilities, she also sells antiques on the side.

Asked if she had advice for healthful longevity, Esther replied, "Get in with the Lord and do something. You'll be much happier. I'd be a couch potato, too, if I didn't have something to do."

Probably the best description of Esther can be found on a poster hung on the light green concrete wall in her Sunday school room. A teddy bear decked out in sunglasses and a tie-dyed T-shirt is accompanied by the caption, "I'm a heaven-made original; a one-of-a-kind design."

So is Esther.

Bibliocipher

By Charles Marx
copyright 1996

QHU — OCGI — AQVU,
XGFVGP G WH — OCG
FWDU YGAZA BCDVAO,
QHU OCWZ ACQFO XG
AQPGU, QHU OCI
CWZAG.

QBQA AVNOGGH:

OCVDOI-WHG


Clue: A equals B

Have fun with cryptography and exercise your Bible knowledge. A King James Version Bible verse has been enciphered by letter substitution. The same letter is substituted throughout the puzzle. Solve by trial and error. Answer to last week's puzzle: Romans Ten Thirteen.



Farewell, with prayer

R.P. Sugg (right), retired Chief Justice of the Mississippi Supreme Court and a member of First Church, Jackson, shares a word of encouragement with new missionaries David (left) and Maria Ortega after the Dec. 8 missionary appointment service at First Church, Jackson. Sugg is the father of Rob Sugg, Southern Baptist missionary to Taiwan. (Photo by William H. Perkins Jr.)



LifeAnswers

Ron Mumbower, Ph.D.
Minister of Counseling
First Church, Jackson

We recently learned that our son and his girlfriend gave up a baby for adoption while they were in college, and my wife wants to find our grandchild. Is that a good idea?

You must think this through as thoroughly as possible. Finding your grandchild can be exciting, but doing so has the potential of stirring new and different emotions not only for you and your wife, but also for your son, the child, and the adoptive family. You should be prepared for the possibility that your efforts will be viewed by those people as an intrusion and not a blessing. Here are some questions you must ask yourself and your wife; discuss with your son; and seek God's answers in prayer before you begin this search:

- What are the true reasons you want to locate the child?
- What reaction will the child have?
- What will be the impact on the adoptive family?
- How does your son feel about this?
- How will you feel after the child is found?

Contact a Christian adoption agency to gain insight from people who work in this field. Also, talk with adopted people

and adoptive parents to understand how they would react to such an experience in their lives. Maintaining a strong prayer life during this time cannot be overemphasized.

I will have health problems for the rest of my life because of sins I have committed. Why is God punishing me so harshly?

There are powerful entities in nature that gain entry into our lives and bodies when we sin. It's unfortunate that our modern depictions of sin do not stress this fact. Your health problems are the natural consequence of sin. You can view your problems as divine punishment, but in reality they are the result of the sin nature against which every one of us continually struggles. It's true that God can remove your sin consequences if he decides to do so, but it's also true that he can help you adjust to your situation and learn from your mistakes in order to become a more obedient servant. The Apostle Paul was given a similar thorn in his flesh, but he used it as a reminder of God's grace in the midst of the great discouragements in his ministry (2 Cor. 12:7-10). Likewise, King David suffered greatly because of his sins; read Psalm 51 to understand how he dealt with the consequences.

Send your counseling questions to LifeAnswers c/o The Baptist Record, P.O. Box 530, Jackson, MS 39205-0530. Please be brief. Name is not required. Remember: in time of crisis, your pastor can make recommendations on your counseling needs.

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READY TO GO — Helen Harlan (center) and her husband speak with a fellow member of The Church on Brady following Sunday services. The couple plan to serve as overseas workers in Asia. Helen Harlan spent two years as a missionary with the Foreign Mission Board, supported by the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering. (BP photo by Bob Carey)

By Joe Conway
SBC Brotherhood Commission

The Church on Brady takes a no-nonsense approach to missions. Basically, if you're a Christian, you're involved in world evangelization.

"The people God wants to use are in every church. Equipping and training the people God has given you is critical to the mission of the church," Carol Davis, director of ministries for Brady said.

term missionaries by the score. Twenty-four adult members are currently in full-time missions service with three more family units and two singles likely to be appointed this year.

Member Helen Chao Harlan is back from Asia after serving with the Foreign Mission Board from 1992-94. Newly married, she plans a return to the field to continue full-time work with her husband.

"The Lottie Moon support was a big part of my ability to minister in Asia. I had gone on two short-term missions before where we raised our own support. Through the Lottie Moon giving, I was able to fully concentrate on the work. I really benefited from that," she said.

"I want to thank people for praying and giving. I know a lot of people say they don't know where their money goes, but I can tell you, it helps spread the gospel."

"Because of my ethnic background, I was able to go places that other missionaries could not go. I will always remember a man who came to hear us. He had walked for four hours to hear the preaching. I asked him if there was anything we could bring him."

"He said, 'Just bring us the word of God.' He could have asked for anything. I want people to know that their giving makes a difference," she said.

Short-term teams have also been embarking from Brady since 1978. Three young adult members just returned from a 22-day trip to Indonesia.

"I learned a lot about disci-

pline," Michael Tafoya said of his missions involvement. "Those people pray five times a day. They showed me that we have a God who is listening."

"He wants to hear us. We have a prayer life built around our schedules. They set their schedule based on their prayer life," he said.

Beatrice Hestand said her Indonesian mission experience gave her a new perspective on her Lord. "It showed me how big God is and how small I am. God is working in lives all over the world," Hestand said. For the third member of the trio, following God's call was the lesson learned.

"The trip confirmed for me the creation of a pattern of obedience every day. I found I can give up my life for the gospel. I didn't know if I could do that," Sylvia Olivares said.

Current Teaching Pastor Tom Wolf, whose vision set the

course that would see Brady regularly commission full-time missionaries from among its members, came to the church as pastor 28 years ago.

"My Southern Baptist pastor influenced me to go to Moody Bible Institute," Wolf explained. "They have a motto there, 'If churches were doing their job, Moody would not be necessary.'"

"In the New Testament, what they reproduced was churches," he continued. "The concept of reproducibility, the church as a seminary, comes from many influences, but I had a personal conviction to mobilize the church to fulfill the radical command of God to take the gospel to the ends of the earth."

"God's people are the instruments of God fulfilling his purpose."

"All the resources needed to see his purpose done are in the local church," he said.

What your Lottie Moon gifts can do!

A Lottie Moon gift of \$5 can

- ◆ provide a pair of shoes for an orphan child in Bulgaria.
- ◆ rent a projector to show the Jesus film in Kenya.

A Lottie Moon gift of \$50 can

- ◆ buy two evangelistic videos in Guatemala.
- ◆ pay for 25 copies of "Survival Kit for New Christians" in the Russian language to disciple new believers in Siberia.

A Lottie Moon gift of \$500 can

- ◆ pay for two months electricity during the winter for a missionary house in France.
- ◆ pay for a semester of seminary classes for a future Brazilian pastor.

A Lottie Moon gift of \$5,000 can

- ◆ fund the translation and publication of evangelism training books in Finnish.
- ◆ pay for a series of musical accompaniment tapes and hymnals for churches in Portugal which have no piano or organ.

A Lottie Moon gift of \$50,000 can

- ◆ build two new Baptist church buildings in Kazakhstan.
- ◆ set up a new missionary in Zimbabwe with a car, office equipment and evangelistic equipment such as a video projector.



MISSIONARIES

From Churches with Love

WHAT'S IN THE RECORD

Warren nixes NAMB post

Tackling holiday blues

Churches key to missions

A refugee Christmas

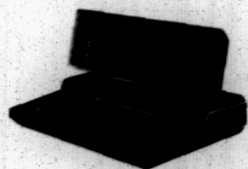
Looking back

10 years ago
Royal Ambassadors of Second Avenue Church, Laurel, sell loaves of homemade bread for the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering for Foreign Missions. The group raises over \$200 to apply toward the church's goal of \$6,000.

25 years ago
Historic Palestine Church, Hinds-Madison Association, burns to the ground. Organized in 1821 as a community church for all Christians, it became a Baptist church in 1827 and hosted the second meeting of the Mississippi Baptist Convention.

30 years ago
Latest estimates show that Southern Baptist Sunday Schools will reach a record high in 1996 with 3,750,373 enrolled — a gain of 225,063 for the year. Training Union enrollment climbed 99,141 during the year to reach 802,473.

EDITOR'S NOTEBOOK



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The implausibility of the Christmas story

This is how the birth of Jesus came about: His mother Mary was pledged to be married to Joseph, but before they came together, she was found to be with child through the Holy Spirit. Because Joseph her husband was a righteous man and did not want to expose her to public disgrace, he had in mind to divorce her quietly.

But after he had considered this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, "Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins."

Matt. 1:18-21 (NIV)

Ponder for a moment how implausible such a concept must appear to the purely scientific mind.

Who could possibly believe a 1,000 year-old collection of 5,000 year-old verbal histories, the origins of which cannot be verified beyond a reasonable doubt, would foretell the coming of a Messiah and then ascribe the fulfillment of that prophecy to the obscure, apparently illegitimate birth of a Jewish commoner in a backwater Middle East town before there was even a decent calendar?

The biologist would explain that except for parthenogenesis in some lower plant and animal forms, no creature on earth ever came into existence without the sexual union of a male and a female of the same species.

The geneticist would ask, since every person must receive half his deoxyribonucleic acid (DNA) from his mother and half from his father, where was

the Holy Spirit's DNA?

The physician would posit that a child born in that era under such unsterile, primitive conditions probably didn't survive very long anyway.

The historian would assert the fact that no one is absolutely sure what time of year — or even the year itself — that Jesus was born.

The lawyer would demand that Mary submit to a physical examination to disprove her incredulous claim that she was pregnant and a virgin at the same time.

The atheist would argue that since there is no God, there can be no Son of God.

The sleep researcher would attest that since dreams are nothing more than the brain randomly misfiring during unconscious rest, Joseph's vision meant nothing.

The abortionist would say... well, we know what the abortionist would say.

No reasonable explanation can be found in science for the events surrounding Jesus' birth, so why should we believe the Bible account?

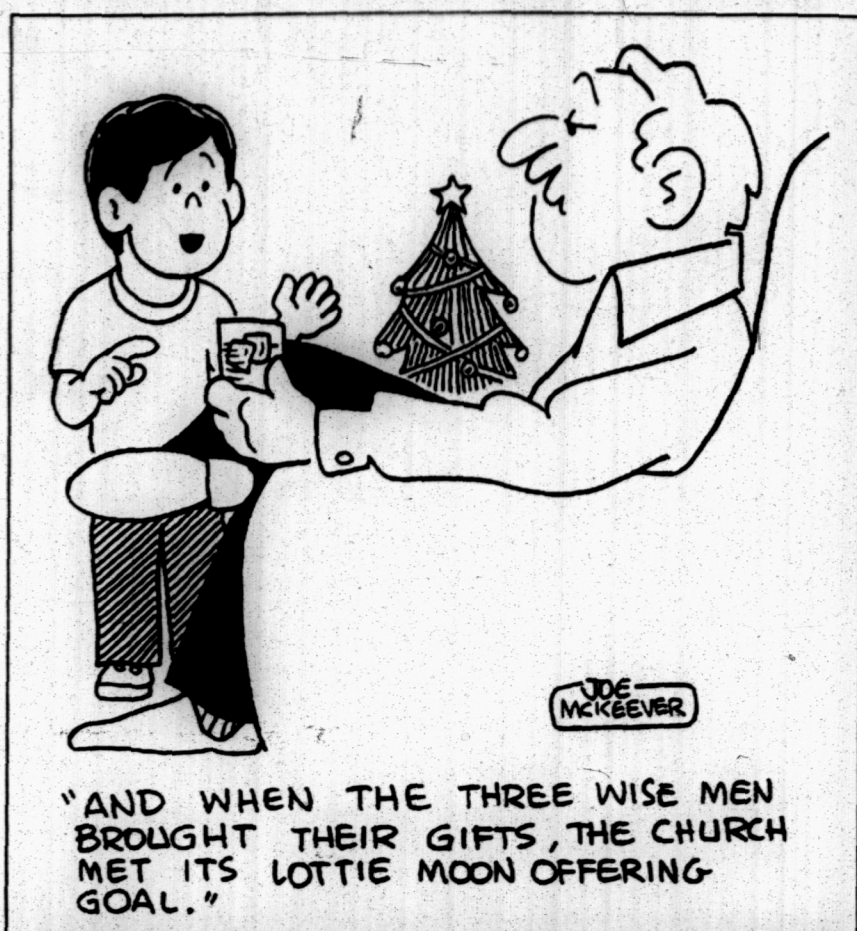
In a word — faith.

The righteousness of the gospel message is grounded in faith (Rom. 1:17). We derive our faith from accepting that message (Rom. 10:17), not by what we sense in our natural world (2 Cor. 5:8).

We must cover with faith everything we hold to be true (2 Ch. 20:20). We know that with faith, nothing is impossible (Matt. 17:20, Mark 11:22).

Faith is understanding that we cannot understand everything (Heb 11:3), and yet we must still be willing to turn control of our lives over to God (Psalm 97:10).

Faith is accepting with all your heart that God is who he says he is in his Word; that



Jesus is the Son of God; that Jesus came into this world exactly as the Bible describes; and that Jesus is everything the Bible says he is.

There are people who live as if they believe every word of that statement. They call themselves Christians.

At this special time of year in the Christian world, be sure to make special time to share your faith with someone who doesn't know Jesus as the Christ. Show them by word and deed the true meaning of Christmas.

During this time of seemingly endless gift-giving, be sure your gifts really count for something. Give your faith to those who really need it, and give your money to the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering for Foreign Missions so every unsaved person on the globe can hear about Jesus before he comes again — and he is coming.

Our Lord has asked us to share both our faith and our resources with a lost world.

After what he did for us, it's the least we can do for him.

Delivery delayed

"The Baptist Record" will not publish on Dec. 26. Due to the federal holiday on Jan. 1, delivery of the Jan. 2 issue of "The Baptist Record" may be delayed in some areas by one to three days.

GUEST OPINION:

BWA: Full Speed Ahead

By Denton Lotz, General Secretary,
Baptist World Alliance

The Baptist World Alliance (BWA) is the extension of the local church into the whole world. BWA unites 188 Baptist conventions/unions (including the Southern Baptist Convention) and 153,000 local congregations into one great fellowship of love.

Please join us in 1997 in continuing to make a difference.

Baptist World Aid (BWAid) — This December, Hutu refugees in Zaire are being helped through BWAid. What other organization but BWAid could enable Baptists in the U.S.A. and Australia, Canada, Germany, Great Britain, India, South Africa, and Brazil, etc., to send relief all over the world?

Thank God that Baptists together have responded this year by helping those in need in Croatia and Bosnia, India and Bangladesh, China and Philippines, Zimbabwe and Angola, Bulgaria and Rwanda, and the list goes on.

Evangelism and Education — Millions have never heard that Jesus Christ is the fullness of God and their Reconciler and Peacemaker.

BWA, through evangelism and education, has enabled Baptists worldwide to come together to study and pray and then go out to work to reach the unreached peoples of the world, in what we call "World A."

What a joy to see Nigerian Baptists go to Ghana; Brazilian Baptists go to Angola; Japanese Baptists go to Thailand; Korean Baptists to Bangladesh; and Indian Baptists to Nepal.

All over the world, former

missionary-receiving countries are now sending out missionaries to their neighbors.

Communications — All of our communications are designed to keep Baptists globally informed, intelligently aware, and spiritually alert to the necessity to pray and work for Baptists worldwide. Prayer does change things and make a difference.

Fellowship — The many BWA-sponsored conferences enable a networking of sharing, concern, and prayers that far exceeds our ability to report. Friendships develop into partnerships, books are sent, partnership teams encouraged, and

pulpit exchanges planned.

A spiritual renewal comes from having been with brothers and sisters in the faith.

Ministry support — Sometimes the problems of the world are so great that we think we cannot do anything.

Recently we were with the vice-president of Estonia. He said that the prayers of the believers brought down the walls of communism.

"Many thought the wall would never fall, but we leaned against it and it was rotten and fell down. The prayers of the believers indeed were answered," he said.

Never before has BWA been up against so many difficult walls, but with your support, prayers, and faith, we believe they will fall down by the power of our Lord Jesus Christ.

For more information, contact BWA at 6733 Curran Street, McLean, Va. 22101-6005. Telephone: (703) 790-8980.